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Cold October

**Tuesday, October 16, 1962**

“Diana Elizabeth Prentice, you are eating lunch with your parents, not the Soviet leader,” I told myself sternly, squinting at my reflection in the bathroom mirror. “You can do this.” I smoothed my hands over my A-line suit jacket and readjusted my pearl necklace one more time before stepping into the bustling restaurant.

I scanned the room until my eyes settled on a pink Chanel pillbox hat and an equally pepto-bismol colored tweed suit. Regardless of where she went, my mother always managed to simultaneously be the most immaculately and most obnoxiously dressed woman in the room.

As I walked towards my parent’s booth, I focused on the click of my heels on the hardwood floor. I had always loved Old Ebbitt Grill since my parents started taking me there when I was four. Even when Friday family dinners turned into monthly interrogations, my connection to the restaurant and its history never faded .

“Diana, darling,” mother’s sickly-sweet voice greeted me with false sincerity. “You’re late.”

“Yes, well, I had to finish up some things at work.”

“‘Work,’” My father scoffed.

“And your shoes are scuffed,” She frowned. “Did you walk? We could’ve sent the driver. You never let us send the driver.”

“Why don’t we order, Mother?” I sighed and flicked my napkin across my lap. My father raised his hand and, almost instantly, a waiter appeared.

Like clockwork, my father ordered a medium-rare steak and my petite, wiry mother ordered the ‘dieter’s special’ and a martini. The ‘dieters special’ was a revolting concoction of pineapple and cottage cheese. I once told her that the only reason it was called the ‘dieter’s special’ was that it was so horrible you’d just end up not eating anything, but she didn’t think that was very funny. I ordered a burger and fries and Mother raised her eyebrows.

“Diana, I don’t know why you can’t order something a little more...feminine.”

“Give her a break, Martha, the girl looks like a string bean.” My father rolled his eyes and sipped his scotch and water.

“You are looking rather thin, Diana.” Mother squinted and started scanning me over. “Are you sure they aren’t working you too hard...*over there*?”

*Over there* was my mother’s euphemism for “The White House,” where I had been working for the past three years. Neither of my parents had ever supported my work at the White House, but recently they had been especially passionate in their objections to my professional decisions.

Before I could say anything, my father interjected, “I’m still not happy about you working for that Ruskie.”

“Dad! That’s not funny!” Since I had started working as Dean Rusk’s secretary, my father had spent every moment of our time together trying to get me to resign.

“I didn’t say it was. It’s bad enough you’re working at the White House under a Democratic president. I don’t want *my daughter* working for some Russian communist.”

“Just because he doesn’t want to go to war with Russia doesn’t mean he’s a communist! How can you--”

“Diana.” Mother interrupted to change the subject before I could get any further. “Did you know Penny and Margaret are both pregnant?”

“How lovely for Penny and Margaret.” I scowled. My lack of children at twenty-five displeased my mother more than anything.

“Penny asked me the other day when you planned to start having children, and I told her I didn’t know but we hoped it would be soon, right, dear?”

What she actually meant by that statement was ‘I didn’t actually talk to Penny, but I’ll use her as an excuse to talk to you about children.’ I responded to her questions the same way I always did, “I’m working, Mom. I’m not ready for kids yet.”

“You don’t have much time! You’re not even married yet! I know you want to be independent and have a professional career, but you need to start thinking about finding a nice young man and settling down soon!”

“Actually, I wanted to talk to you both about something.”

Ironically, I heard my mother whisper, “Oh please, don’t tell me you’re pregnant.” But of course, having a child out of wedlock would have been worse that not having one at all.

“As you know, Nathan and I have been seeing each other for a while now...about five years, actually...and, well...he proposed. I’m engaged.”

“*Nathan Stokowski?*” My father roared. “The *Polish* one?” Despite having been with Nathan for five years, I had only taken him to see my parents a few times. None of these meetings had gone well. Nathan was polite, charming, educated, and caring. But there were two things about him that my parents deemed unforgivable: he was Polish and middle-class.

“We supported you through Vassar, we’re paying for your apartment in Georgetown--”

“No, you tried. I didn’t let you,” I interrupted.

“And we’re supporting you in this new job of yours. But we cannot support you marrying some Polish Air force pilot, Diana!”

I took a deep breath and nodded slowly. Then I pushed myself away from the table, stood up, and walked out of the restaurant.

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It only took me four minutes to walk down Pennsylvania Avenue back to work, but by the time I had reached the staff entrance to the West Wing, I had worked up a sweat from silently cursing my parents and their ridiculous expectations.

I jerked open the door and stomped through the hallway towards the lobby. As I forced my way through a swarm of employees, ranging in status from personal secretary to Press Secretary, I noticed that the atmosphere of the West Wing seemed frantic.

I pulled off my coat and wondered what I had missed.

“Diana! There you are!” Rusk marched brusquely towards me. True to his nature, he was calm and composed amongst the chaos, but I could tell something was worrying him.

“Mr. Secretary, is everything alright?”

“Yes, yes. Everything’s fine. People around here are always stressed, aren’t they?” he smiled slightly.

I nodded because the answer was yes, everyone who worked in the White House was always stressed...but some of us studied case law for fun, so that wasn’t really surprising.

Then, cutting straight to the point because no Secretary of State has ever had time for small talk, he said, “Diana, I’ll need you to cancel all of my appointments for the next few hours.”

I flinched. “Mr. Rusk, you have a meeting in thirty minutes with--”

“I know,” he interrupted. “That will have to wait. I need you to cancel everything...I have a more important meeting.”

He turned and started walking towards the Cabinet Room, and I followed quickly behind. I pulled out the leather-bound itinerary that had become my Bible since I had started working for Dean Rusk, and began crossing events off the list and flipping through pages of phone numbers that I would have to call to reschedule Rusk’s plans. With my head down, I almost didn’t notice that I was following him into the Cabinet Room, where Secretary of Defense McNamara and National Security Advisor Bundy were already inside. I stopped short of the door and he turned to face me.

“I think that will be all for now, Diana. Thank you.” Then he closed the door and I was left to wonder what was going on behind it. At that time I didn’t know Kennedy had received photographic evidence of Russian missiles in Cuba from Richard Heyser, a U2 spy-plane pilot. I didn’t know that what I had almost walked in on was the first meeting of ExComm.

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I walked home that night with my friend Sherri, who worked in the telephone operating room connecting calls.

“Di!” She greeted me excitedly, “How was lunch with your parents?”

“Not so great, but I don’t want to talk about it.” I shrugged, and Sherri nodded. Part of what I loved about Sherri was that she never pressed for more than what I was willing to tell, and as a private, serious person, that wasn’t much.

“Well, if you don’t want to talk about your day, I’ll talk about mine,” She sighed. “Jesus, Di, it was crazy. I don’t know what in the name of Peter, Paul, and Mary was going on up there, but I was connecting calls all day without a single break.”

I would’ve told her about Rusk cancelling his plans, and the overall frantic atmosphere in the West Wing, but I had a feeling that the security clearance I needed in order to work in the White House was for moments like this. I was right.

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**Thursday, October 18, 1962**

The problem with emergencies is that you can’t plan for them. You can’t pencil them in for 4:00 on Tuesday, or place a red tab next to them in your itinerary.

What I hadn’t known on Tuesday, when Rusk asked me to cancel his afternoon plans, was that I would be rearranging his entire schedule for the rest of October to accommodate an emergency of international importance. Rusk was in meetings with ExComm around the clock trying to prevent nuclear war with the Soviet Union. Even though I wasn’t privy to most of the knowledge being exchanged in ExComm’s meetings, the other secretaries and I had picked up enough that we could piece together what was going on. We knew that Nikita Khrushchev had placed missiles in Cuba, which was under the control of Fidel Castro. We also knew that these missiles were aimed at the U.S., and if fired, could travel 1,000 miles and kill millions of American citizens.

Prior to his discovery of nuclear missiles in Cuba, President Kennedy had arranged a meeting with Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko, which was taking place that night. I had to cancel dinner plans with Nathan to help organize the meeting between Gromyko and Kennedy. I was intrigued to see how Kennedy would handle the meeting, knowing that the Soviets had malicious intentions.

When Gromyko arrived at 5:00, my friend and fellow secretary, Carol, was emptying candies from a plastic bag into a little crystal jar for the Kennedy children to eat when they visited.

“I didn’t go to Vassar for this,” Carol mumbled, picking the nasty licorice-flavored candies no one liked out of the mix and throwing them, with considerable force, into the trash.

“No, you went for this,” I turned her towards the throng of journalists and photographers hurrying towards the Oval Office. Pushing through the crowd was Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko.

Seeing politics in action always boosted Carol’s mood. “That man reminds me of Dracula.” She chuckled.

“Shhh,” I whispered, trying not to laugh.

“Oh, come on, Di,” She offered me the jar of Jelly Beans. “Look, he has a widow’s peak.”

I snickered and took the only surviving licorice. We watched as Gromyko entered the Oval Office with the press following closely on his heels. We had to push some of the press members back because there wasn’t enough space.

“What I wouldn’t give to be in there,” I sighed. I had dreamed of a career in politics since I was twelve, but my gender made that dream unrealistic, just as religion almost made President Kennedy’s election an impossibility.

“What do you think they’re talking about in there?” Carol said, biting her lip. The stress of the crisis was weighing down on all of us, and even Carol’s attempts to lighten the air did little to relieve the panic we all felt regarding the missiles in Cuba.

“I don’t know,” I said, placing a hand on her shoulder. What had actually happened in that meeting was that Gromyko had lied to President Kennedy. Kennedy repeated a quote from his September 4 address on Cuba that promised, should offensive missiles be placed in Cuba, “The gravest issues would arise,” and Gromyko stated that the only aid being provided to Cuba by the Soviet Union was that of an agricultural and defensive nature.

I wondered how President Kennedy could have sat through two hours of Gromyko’s lies without letting on that he knew about the offensive missiles.

## Saturday, October 20, 1962

Even though it was a Saturday, I arrived at work at half past six in the morning. I had been coming in earlier and earlier so that I would be ready for Rusk when he arrived, but I was still only five minutes ahead of him.

“Diana,” He said, dropping his coat on my desk and taking the coffee I had prepared for him.

“Cancel all of your plans for today?” I asked, because that had been his first request for the past three days, and I knew what to expect.

“Yes, thank you.” He turned and started walking towards the Cabinet Room.

“Mr. Rusk,” I called after him. “Everyone I’ve canceled on for you has asked about rescheduling. And as familiar as I am with your itinerary, sir, I don’t know what to tell them about when you’ll be available considering the...issue at hand. ” His shoulders dropped for a moment and he looked away, exhausted. I knew that every night for the past few days when he made me go home before ten, he had stayed much later.

“I don’t know, either, to be honest with you.”

“Well, then,” I clasped my hands with false confidence. “I’ll just take note of all of the appointments I cancel and, when you have time, we can talk about rescheduling. I have everything under control,” I promised. “Let me know if you need anything.” I tried to sound reassuring, but the truth was I barely holding it together. I hadn’t talked to Nathan in over a week, and I had no idea what was going on at his base. I also hadn’t heard from my parents since we had fought at lunch, and even though we had never really gotten along, I found myself worrying that, given the crisis at hand, that would be our last interaction.

I was distracted from my worrying when Rusk smiled and said, “You know, Diana, you’re one of the good ones.”

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Later that day Kennedy arrived home from a trip to Chicago. He was supposed to stay longer, but he came home early because of a “cold.”

In reality, Kennedy came home early to meet with ExComm and discuss a quarantine of Cuba. I wish it really had been a cold.

**Monday, October 22, 1962**

On October 22, the crisis became public. Or at least part of it.

Kennedy addressed the nation at 7:00 p.m. with a speech written by Ted Sorensen. I had seen Ted holed up in one of the offices working on Kennedy’s speech the day before, but I hadn’t known then the kind of national panic it would cause.

I had watched from behind a mob of newscasters and cameramen as Kennedy told America his plan to blockade Cuba and go to DEFCON 2.

My sister called the next day. Rusk had made me go home at nine to get some rest, so I was there to answer the phone when she called for the fifth time.

“Diana, what is going on?” She said before even greeting me. “Rob and Julie are doing duck and cover drills at school, and when I went to the grocery store today the shelves were practically empty! You must know something, Di. What’s going on over there?”

“Well, you saw the broadcast, right?”

“Of course I saw the broadcast, Diana. Everyone and their goldfish saw the broadcast. Why do you think I’m calling? But don’t you know something else?” I found it funny how Deb, like my parents, had strongly opposed my professional decisions, yet she tried to take advantage of my political connections whenever she could. She never even spoke to me unless she wanted something.

“I don’t know anything,” I lied. “But even if I did, I couldn’t tell you.”

“You know something! Tell me! Diana, my children’s lives are at stake--”

“Kennedy’s brilliant, everything will be okay,” I couldn’t believe I was trying to calm down my sister when I had a fiancé in the Air Force to worry about.

“Oh don’t tell me about the goddamn Kennedy’s. You know what Daddy says about the Kennedys?” Deb took my father’s word as gospel.

“Yes, I do, actually. Goodbye, Deborah.” I hung up the phone and stumbled back to bed. I watched the door and wondered what Nathan was doing at his base, and whether or not he was safe.

**Tuesday, October 23, 1962**

True to his word, Kennedy ordered a Naval quarantine around Cuba and demanded that the Soviets remove the missiles.

When I arrived at work that day, I saw Carol standing by her window, looking out at the perfectly manicured lawn. When she turned around, I saw the toll the past few days had taken on her. Her face was pale, her eyes dark and stained by tears. The pale blue butterick suit she always jokingly said made her feel like Jacqueline Kennedy hung off of her thin frame.

“Carol...” I raised a hand to my mouth in shock.

“Tommy’s in the Navy,” she said, struggling to accept her words and the implication they carried.

“Is he--the quarantine?” I couldn’t find the strength to ask if Carol’s brother was on one of the ships that Kennedy sent to block the Soviets from Cuba.

But Carol knew exactly what I was trying to ask. She nodded and bit her lip.

“Oh, Carol…” I reached out and placed my hand on her trembling arm. Carol, normally vehemently opposed to hugs, buried her head in my shoulder and cried as I rubbed her back.

After a few minutes, she straightened herself up and wiped away her tears.

“Rusk is in the Cabinet Room, in case you were wondering,” she sniffed.

I nodded and then perched on her desk. We stayed that way for what seemed like hours, until I finally spoke up.

“I have to know,” I hopped off her desk and marched towards the Cabinet Room, Carol following close behind. Once outside, I checked both sides of the hall, then leaned my ear against the door.

I could barely hear anything, and it remained that way for almost ten minutes. But suddenly, I heard rising murmurs culminate in silence, as if they were waiting for something. Waiting for the Soviet ships’ response. I learned later that, in that moment of silence, they were waiting for a call on whether or not the Soviet ships would turn around, or continue on and go up against the U.S. Navy.

As I stood outside, trying to get a hint of what was going on, I didn’t know that the Soviet ships had turned around. But I could tell from the faint laughs and shouts of victory from inside that something good had happened.

## Wednesday, October 24, 1962

I finally left the office at ten o’clock to meet Nathan at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue. He had called just an hour earlier to tell me he was coming home. I had spent so much time worrying about him and wondering what he was doing at his base that I almost couldn’t believe it when I saw him, leaned up against a tree with his hands stuffed in his pockets and his shoulders slumped.

When he saw me coming, he straightened up and smiled.

“How are you?” I gave him a quick hug.

“I’m ok. Worried, I guess. The past few days have been pretty stressful. You?”

“You have no idea,” I laughed half-heartedly. “Kennedy’s ordered increased flyovers, but you already know that, I guess.”

“Yeah, my buddy at Edwards in California was given that sortie. He’s pretty excited. I guess they all are.”

“Excited?” I raised my eyebrows. “They think this is exciting?”

“Well, yeah, it’s what they’ve trained to do. And getting some real action is pretty exciting,” He shrugged.

“Don’t you realize there are lives at stake?”

“We’re trying to *save* lives.” His green eyes narrowed.

“There are people in the White House trying to save lives too, except they’re using diplomacy! The Kennedys--”  
 “Oh, for God’s sake, Di. Can we have a single conversation without mentioning the Kennedys?”

“Excuse me?” I recoiled.

“I’m sick of hearing about the Kennedys and their perfect approach to politics. Diplomacy can’t fix everything, Di, you know that.”

“Why not? Why can’t these idiotic war hawks like Maxwell Taylor calm down and try to resolve conflicts like adults instead of pulling out nuclear weapons every time someone steps on their toes?”

“Jesus Christ, Diana! There are some things in this world I want to protect - you and my family being the most important. If I need to go to war to do that, then I’ll do it.”

“But we don’t need to go to war! We never *need* to go to war!”

“We never need to go to war? Why do we have a military then? Why am I an Air Force pilot instead of some peace-loving monk? It’s because sometimes you have to take action to protect the things you care about. One of the reasons we have armies is so we can protect people like you, valuable people who do valuable things, like studying case law in your free time.” He laughed slightly and tried to wrap his arm around my shoulder.

I brushed it off, “No, we’re not done with this.”

He shook his head and mumbled, “I wonder what would happen if you’d show the same determination talking to your parents about us as you do when you’re fighting me.” Nathan had wanted to talk to my parents for over a year, but I hadn’t let him, promising instead that I would talk to them myself. But based on how they had reacted at lunch, that might not have been a great idea.

“I did talk to my parents, actually,” I huffed.

“What?” He stopped. “How did it go?”

“How do you think it went, Nathan? You’re a Catholic, Polish, middle-class Air Force pilot! They weren’t exactly thrilled.” The second I had finished speaking those words, I wished I could’ve taken them back.

Nathan, normally the most determined person I knew, looked defeated.

“I’m so sorry, Nate, I didn’t mean that. Please--.”

“No, don’t apologize.” He shook his head. “Don’t say anything.” We walked the rest of the way home in silence.

**Thursday, October 25, 1962**

“Diana, get over here! Your soulmate is speaking!” Carol shouted from down the hall. I dropped four massive files of paperwork on Rusk’s desk and rushed down the hall to find Carol standing in front of the TV, watching Adlai Stevenson at the U.N. Conference.

I had been anxiously waiting to hear Stevenson’s speech all day, especially since I still felt awful about my fight the night before with Nathan. He was going to spend the day at home, and I had planned to take the afternoon off, but when I woke up that morning he had already gone, leaving a note in his barely-legible handwriting that he had gone back to the Anacostia-Bolling base.

“He’s not my soulmate,” I rolled my eyes and inched closer to the small black and white screen.

*“...Mr. Zorin, I remind you that you did not deny the existence of these weapons. Instead, we heard that they had suddenly become defensive weapons. But today again if I heard you correctly, you now say that they do not exist, or that we haven’t proved they exist, with another fine flood of rhetorical scorn.”*

“Why didn’t you call me earlier?” I grumbled at Carol. “Now I’ve missed some.” Adlai was presenting at the U.N. Security Council, accusing ambassador Zorin of concealing information on the existence of Soviet missiles in Cuba. Zorin wasn’t responding.

*“All right, sir, let me ask you one simple question: Do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the U.S.S.R. has placed and is placing medium- and intermediate-range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no—don’t wait for the translation—yes or no?”*

Zorin refused to answer.

*“You can answer yes or no. You have denied they exist. I want to know if I understood you correctly. I am prepared to wait for my answer until hell freezes over, if that’s your decision. And I am also prepared to present the evidence in this room.”*

I smiled and shook my head in amazement. Adlai had been accused of cowardice for opposing war with the Soviet Union, but now he was proving that diplomacy was not a weaker means of resolving conflict.

*“...And now I hope that we can get down to business, that we can stop this sparring. We know the facts, and so do you, sir, and we are ready to talk about them. Our job here is not to score debating points. Our job, Mr. Zorin, is to save the peace. And if you are ready to try, we are.”*

**Friday, October 26, 1962**

I know it isn’t possible to hold your breath for an entire day, but if you were working in the White House on the twenty-sixth of October, 1962, then you know what it feels like.

Stupidly, I had thought that Stevenson’s speech might have done something. But, as usual, I had been too optimistic. Concerned that the Soviet might refuse to remove the missiles from Cuba, ExComm started discussing an invasion.

“I hate being on the outside,” I confessed to Carol as I narrowed my focus on the door to the Cabinet Room. That godforsaken slab of wood was the only thing keeping me from knowing where our country stood between peace and nuclear warfare.

“If I were in there--” I began.

“We know, Diana,” Sherri and Carol said in unison. Sherri, who had come up on her break from the call-operating room, looked fraught with worry. Her small, bony hands were curled into tight fists, and her slender arms were crossed over her chest. I had no doubt that the call-operating room had been just as tense as the West Wing for the past few days.

“How can they even *consider* nuclear war?” I hissed. They looked at me with exhausted stares. Seeing how tired and worn down they both looked, I began to wonder about my own appearance. I turned to the mirror hung in the hallway and saw that I was just as beaten down. Thin strands of my straight brown hair, which I had hardly bothered to even brush for the past few days, hung in my lifeless gray eyes. My jacket, now a full size too big, was haphazardly buttoned up to my collar bone, left bare from forgetting my pearl necklace. To top it all off, there was a rather large pen mark on my face and several smudges of typewriter ink on my hands. I noticed Sherri and Carol were both examining their reflections, too.

“We look like death,” Sherri said plainly. Suddenly, all three of us burst into uncontrollable laughter. We laughed until I couldn’t breathe and Carol cried. And when she cried, she used her thumb wetted with her tears to wipe the hideous blue pen mark from my face.

“Well, at least we aren’t *actually* dead,” Carol pointed out, nodding toward the Cabinet Room.

“Yet,” Sherri added after a moment of silence. And just like that, we were back to holding our breaths.

I began to wonder what my mother and father were doing. I wondered if they had thought about our fight, or if they had tried to call. It sounds horrible, but I honestly worried that the last memory I would have with them would be of me walking out after they refused to support my engagement.

My thoughts were interrupted by Rusk stomping down the hall past me.

“Mr. Secretary!” I jumped. “Is there anything I can help you with?”

“Not unless you can kill a damn war hawk and get away with it,” he mumbled as he passed.

“If Rusk is mad, then we’re in trouble,” Carol pointed out the obvious. Sherri and I remained silent, because we didn’t want to accept the fact that, within the next twenty-four hours, the U.S. might begin a nuclear war.

“My brother called this morning,” she added. “They’re on stand-by. Diana, have you heard anything from Nathan?”

Nathan hadn’t called. All I had been able to do for the past two days was pray he wasn’t on some death-wish flyover of Cuba.

“No,” I cast my eyes downward and traced the toe of my shoe over little patterns in the carpet. Then I raised my head and asked Carol and Sherri the question that had been torturing me since I had seen the note he left the morning after our fight.

“What if...what if something happens? And I don’t see him again?”

“Don’t say that, Diana,” Sherri try to reassure me. Carol didn’t say anything, because she understood exactly how I felt.

**Sunday, October 28, 1962**

The closest I’ve ever come to a heart attack was when I woke up at nine o’clock on the morning of October 28, 1962, three hours late for work.

I flew out of bed, pulled the suit I had worn the day before from the hamper by my door, and ran to work. I had to turn back at the corner of my block because I had forgotten shoes.

As I ran to work in my heels, trying to run my fingers through my hair and wipe leftover mascara from under my eyes with spit, I prepared myself for another day of waiting and praying, and possibly getting fired.

When I arrived at work fifteen minutes later, however, I was greeted by something entirely different.

“Diana!” Carol ran to me and threw her arms around me. “It’s over. It’s all over.”

“What?” I said weakly, crushed by her embrace.

“Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles,” she explained. “We’re off of DEFCON 2.” Neither of us realized then that Kennedy had secretly agreed to remove the U.S. missiles from Turkey.

I pulled away in disbelief. “What?”

“It’s over, Diana, we can breathe now.” Then she smiled and added, “You look absolutely horrible, you know that? Also, it’s nine-thirty a.m. on a Saturday and Rusk gave you the day off.”

I smiled and pulled her back in for another hug.

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I walked home from work later that day feeling relieved, but exhausted. I thought of everything I could have lost had the missiles been launched, had Kennedy declared war. I thought of never speaking to my parents again, of Nathan being deployed. I imagined all of the people I loved being lost without getting the chance to say good-bye.

I had no idea what I was going to do to fix my personal life, since it seemed like the only life I could ever properly manage was Rusk’s work life, but I knew I had to try.

When I opened the door to my apartment, I saw Nathan standing in front of our little kitchen table, dressed in slacks and a button-down shirt instead of his uniform. Beside him stood my mother and father.

Finally, after two weeks of letting everything I was feeling build up inside, I broke down.

I doubled over and cried, hardly able to catch my breath. Nathan rushed over and placed his hands on my shoulders, ducking to look into my eyes.

“I’m s-so sorry, Nathan,” I sobbed as he wrapped his arms around me.

“Diana, I wasn’t mad at you,” He assured, “I was mad at myself for never doing what I should’ve done and talking to your parents myself. When I left Wednesday morning, I didn’t go back to the base, I went to speak with them. I wanted to surprise you, but maybe that wasn’t such a good idea.” We both laughed. “I should’ve understood the amount of pressure you’ve been under at work.”

“Oh, sweetie,” my mother said as she rushed over to me and wiped the tears from my eyes with what may have been a three-hundred-dollar handkerchief. For the first time in years, she sounded somewhat genuine. “I can’t even imagine what you’ve been going through.”

“Which is why you shouldn’t be working over there,” my father said sternly, cupping my face in his hands.

“Dad,” I warned.

“Can’t a man be worried about his own daughter? For Christ’s sake, that Goddamn Kennedy almost got you killed!”

“Dad!” I snapped. “Are you here to tell me you hate Kennedy, which I already knew, or are you here for something else?”

“We’re here to say…” My father looked like he was about to choke, like he couldn’t bring himself to say those two unfamiliar words, “we’re sorry.”

“Yes,” my mother agreed quietly. “We may have prejudged your situation a little bit.” She smiled hesitantly at Nathan. I could tell she still wasn’t thrilled, but I sensed a hint of fondness in her eyes.

“You have a nice young man here, Diana,” My father agreed. His intonation made it sound as if he were saying, *“If only he weren’t Polish, Catholic, and poor,”* but I could tell he liked Nathan.

“Well, I like him a bit, too, I guess,” I laughed nervously and let Nathan hold my hand.

“Your sister wanted to be here, by the way,” my mother added cheerfully. “She said she has some wonderful ideas for your wedding. We’re thinking winter, maybe white roses and stephanotis, we could have it at the country club...”

I wanted a spring wedding, my favorite flowers were orchids, and I would rather be married in the firey pits of hell than at the country club, but my parents were trying to be supportive, and Nathan was smiling, and I really didn’t care about anything else.

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Attribution of Research

1. "Adlai Stevenson "Cuban Missle Crisis Debate" Transcript. *Adlai Stevenson "Cuban Missle Crisis Debate" Transcript*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.speeches-usa.com/Transcripts/adlai_stevenson-cuban.html>>.

Adlai Stevenson addressed the U.N. on October 25, 1962.

He presented to the U.N. Security Council.

He accused Soviet Ambassador Zorin of concealing information on the existence of Soviet missiles in Cuba.

Quotes from his speech

2. Cooper, Rachel. "22 Historic Restaurants in Washington DC." *About Travel*. N.p.,

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Old Ebbitt Grill is an iconic restaurant in D.C.

3. "Cuban Missile Crisis Timeline." *Cuban Missile Crisis Timeline*. N.p., n.d. Web.

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U2 pilot Richard Heyser flew over Cuba and photographed missiles.

The first meeting of ExComm took place on October 16th.

Kennedy met with Andrei Gromyko on October 18th.

ExComm suggested a quarantine on October 19th.

Ted Sorensen wrote Kennedy’s speech on October 21st.

Kennedy addressed the nation on October 22nd.

The quarantine occurs on October 23rd, and the Soviet ships turn around.

Kennedy ordered increased flyovers of Cuba after Khrushchev refused to remove the missiles on October 24th.

Discussion about invading Cuba began on October 26th.

Kennedy agreed not to invade Cuba on October 27th, Khrushchev accepted the offer on October 28th.

4. "Dean Rusk | Biography - United States Secretary of State." *Encyclopedia*

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Dean Rusk was Secretary of State.

Rusk had a calm demeanor.

Rusk opposed war with the Soviet Union.

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The Secretary of Defense during the Cuban Missile Crisis was Robert McNamara.

The National Security Advisor was McGeorge Bundy.

Maxwell D. Taylor was a U.S. Army four-star General. He supported war with the Soviet Union.

Ted Sorensen wrote the speech Kennedy gave in his televised national address.

6. Heinen, Paula J. Personal interview. 29 Feb. 2015.

Kennedy’s speech caused national panic. People were terrified of nuclear war, and the threat of missiles being launched into the U.S. was felt by everyone. It seemed like everyone was holding their breaths, hoping Kennedy would be able to negotiate a deal that would prevent war.

Kennedy almost didn’t get elected because he was Catholic.

shelves in grocery stores were being emptied after Kennedy’s speech.

Children did duck and cover drills in school.

“War hawk,” or someone who pushes for war, was a term used by many to describe people like Maxwell D. Taylor, who wanted to start a war with the Soviet Union.

7. "Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling." *Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling*. CNIC, n.d. Web. 26 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.cnic.navy.mil/regions/ndw/installations/jbab.html>>.

Anacostia-Bolling is a base in Washington D.C., where an Air Force pilot living in D.C. would have been stationed.

8. Joynt, Sarah. "Jacqueline Kennedy, Style Icon." *The Fashion Spot*. N.p., 4 June

2010. Web. 13 Feb. 2015. <http://www.thefashionspot.com/

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Style influence of Jacqueline Kennedy: A-line jacket, Chanel pillbox hat, tweed suit.

9. Kennedy, John F. "Cuban missile crisis speech (1962)." 22 Oct. 1962. *ABC-CLIO*

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Kennedy addressed the nation at 7:00 p.m.

Kennedy declared a plan to blockade Cuba and go to DEFCON 2.

10. Lindsay, James M. "TWE Remembers: Andrei Gromyko Lies to John Kennedy (Cuban Missile Crisis, Day Three)." *Council on Foreign Relations*. N.p., 18 Oct. 2012. Web. 25 Mar. 2015. <http%3A%2F%2Fblogs.cfr.org%2Flindsay%2F2012%2F10%2F18%2Ftwe-remembers-andrei-gromyko-lies-to-john-kennedy-cuban-missile-crisis-day-three%2F>.

Gromyko arrived at 5:00 p.m.

He lied to the President about the nature of the Soviet missiles.

Kennedy repeated a quote from his September 4 address on Cuba, saying that the “gravest issues would arise” if offensive missiles were placed in Cuba.

11. "Living in Georgetown - Washington D.C." *Living in Washington D.C.* N.p., n.d.

Web. 13 Feb. 2015. <http://living-in-washingtondc.com/livingingoergetown-washingtondc.

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Diana has an apartment in Georgetown, where someone of her socioeconomic and professional status may have lived.

12. Mitchell, Nealeigh. "Women's Work Wardrobes Through the Decades." *Excelle*. N.p.,

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Pastel blue Butterick suit

13. Mosettig, Michael D. "Cuban Missile Crisis: Memories of a Young Reporter."*PBS*. PBS, 22 Oct. 2012. Web. 25 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/cuban-missile-crisis/>>.

Kennedy cut short his trip to Chicago, claiming to have a “cold,” to return to D.C. and meet with ExComm.

The missiles had a range of 1,000 miles and could kill millions of citizens.

14. Stanley I. Kutler. 3rd ed. Vol. 2. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2003.

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Kennedy made secret negotiations with the Soviet Union in which he agreed to remove missiles from Turkey.

Nikita Khrushchev led the Soviet Union at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Fidel Castro controlled Cuba at the same time.

Pilots at the Edwards base in California were given the sortie to fly over Cuba.

15. Wall, Wendy. "Anti-Communism in the 1950s." *Anti-Communism in the 1950s*. N.p.,

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Diana’s father might have referred to Dean Rusk as a “Ruskie.”

He would have disapproved of Rusk because Rusk did not want war with the Soviet Union. Because people were so afraid of communism in the 1960’s, this would have made Diana’s father suspicious.

16. "Washington DC." Map. *Google Maps*. Google, n.d. Web. 26 Mar. 2015.

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Washington,+DC/@38.8993487,-77.0145665,11z/

data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x89b7c6de5af6e45b:0xc2524522d4885d2a>.

The walk from Old Ebbitt Grill to the White House takes about four minutes.

Pennsylvania avenue is the street on which the White House is located, and would have been taken to commute between the White House and Georgetown.